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## MICAH, I., 5.

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The true reading of this prophetic word has been preserved in more than one ancient version, and after Houbigant<sup>1</sup> a few have substituted it for that of the Massoretic text.<sup>2</sup> But there are still commentators of note who do not follow it in their explanation of Micah,<sup>3</sup> or even pass it by without mention,<sup>4</sup> and the corrupt *textus receptus* serves as a proof-text in the history of the religion of Israel. It does not seem to be superfluous, therefore, once more to treat the critical problem ἀνωθεν, and, if possible, reach some permanent conclusion concerning it by a careful consideration of its pros and its cons.

After Micah has depicted the appearance of Jahwe in its fearful effects (I., 3, 4) he continues as follows, according to the Massoretic text :

בִּפְשַׁע יַעֲקֹב כָּל-זֹאת  
וּבַחֲטָאוֹת בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל  
מִי פֶשַׁע יַעֲקֹב הֲלוֹא שְׁמֵרוֹן  
וּמִי כְמוֹת יְהוּדָה הֲלוֹא יְרוּשָׁלַם

The meaning is clear: Jahwe comes to exercise judgment over his people; the apostasy of Jacob and the sin of Israel cause his wrath. In the second member the first word has been regarded, certainly erroneously, as plural,<sup>6</sup> and therefore it was written with wāw. חטאת corresponds to פֶּשַׁע, and this was the reading of the LXX. among others. But otherwise the first half of the verse is perfectly clear. The Synonyms "Jacob" and "House of Israel," are used to designate the nation as a whole, and thus including the two kingdoms. In the second half, when they are named separately, each with its capital, Jacob stands for the northern kingdom, but the southern must be designated by its own proper name, Judah. The question: "Who is the apostasy of Jacob? Is it not Samaria!" is logically not strictly justifiable, because Samaria was not itself "the apostasy" of Northern Israel. But psychologically it is easily explained and justified. For Micah, the countryman, the sin of his people is concentrated in the capital and its corrupt aristocracy, and what he regards as certain in respect to Jerusalem, he also applies unhesitatingly to Samaria.

<sup>1</sup> *Notae Crit. in V. T. libros II.*, 570 seq.

<sup>2</sup> J. A. Dathe, *Proph. Minores* ed., p. 211. T. Roorda, *Comment. in Val. Michae*, pp. 11-14. T. K. Cheyne, *Micah* (1882) pp. 18, 19.

<sup>3</sup> Among others, Hartmann, Justi, van der Palm.

<sup>4</sup> Among others, Ewald, Bunsen, Caspari, Umbreit, Hitzig-Steiner, Keil.

<sup>5</sup> E. g., by R. Smend (1875), *Moses apud Prophetas*, p. 55 seq., 57, 61. C. J. Bredenkamp, *Gesetz und Propheten* (1881), p. 167.

<sup>6</sup> Of course, in connection with the reading בְּכוֹת in the fourth member, concerning which I shall speak presently.

There remains the fourth member, which we desire especially to treat: "And who [are] the high places of Judah? Are they not Jerusalem!" Let us suppose for an instant that an entirely unanimous tradition bears witness for these words. Even then we should decide that Micah could not have written thus. In the first place, we have the parallel of Jerusalem and the high places of Judah, in the plural—a mistake in the form which surprises us, at least in the case of this prophet. But in the second place, the idea itself, the identification of those high places with Jerusalem strikes us as much more strange. Even though the capital had its bamôth,<sup>1</sup> yet it had fewer of them than any other city in Judea, because it had the temple, which is opposed to the bamôth, and in whose interest these were put away by Josiah<sup>2</sup> if not before this by Hezekiah.<sup>3</sup> To make Jerusalem responsible for that which took place outside of its walls, and in opposition to its wishes—this certainly could not occur to Micah. The relation of the members of the verse furnishes a further difficulty. Just as the third corresponds to the first, so also the fourth must refer to the second. But then it ought to read: "and who is the sin of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem!" There is really no one who denies this. But it is thought that the prophet has purposely expressed this idea in another form, and so enriched it with a new element. Hitzig expresses this as follows: "Die Fortsetzung sollte eigentlich lauten: *und wer die Sünden Israels u. s. w.* Statt dessen benennt Micha diese Sünden; über das Präd. hinaus eilt er zum Subj., welches er als Präd. eines neuen Subj. erscheinen lässt." Thus: the worship of the high places proceeding from Jerusalem, and = the sin of Judah! How strange the first must have sounded to his contemporaries we have already remarked. But now the second: Is it possible that Micah has identified the bamôth with the sin of his people? That would have been formidable enough even for the Deuteronomist and for the Redactor of the Book of Kings, but for Micah it is inconceivable. He does not name the bamôth once. It is true, he expects that Jahwe in the future shall put away from the midst of his people not only the horses and chariots, the fortified cities and the forts, but also the graven images, the maggebas and the asheras.<sup>4</sup> But who warrants us to seek these things only in the bamôth,<sup>5</sup> and even if we were warranted in this, to take for granted that in their use the prophet saw *the sin* of Judah? He himself forbids us this. The perverting of justice, murder, corruption of judges, priests and prophets—these constitute, in his own words, "the apostasy of Jacob, and the sin of Israel," against which, filled with the spirit of Jahwe, he must prophesy.<sup>6</sup> No one who interprets him by his own words can permit the bamôth in chap. i., 5, to stand. But also the tradition obliges us to take them away. They belong to the official text, established in the second century after Christ. It is true, a few MSS. have

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kgs. xxiii., 8.    <sup>2</sup> 2 Kgs. xxii.    <sup>3</sup> 2 Kgs. xviii., 4; cf. verse 22 and Isa. xxxvi., 7.    <sup>4</sup> Chap. v., 9-13.    <sup>5</sup> Compare rather 2 Kgs. xxiii., 4, 6, 7, 11.    <sup>6</sup> Chap. iii., 8, cf. verses 9-11, and 1 seq.

**חטאת** for **במות**,<sup>1</sup> but this can hardly be any thing else but a correction, either involuntary, or carefully weighed, and at any rate perfectly justifiable. For Symmachus<sup>2</sup> rendered τὰ ἐψηλά, and two centuries later Jerome *excelsa*.<sup>3</sup> Neither is there any indication of a Talmudic variant. But opposed to the manuscript which was followed by the Palestinian scribes, we have the much older one whose reading is given by the LXX. With some unessential variations *all* the Greek Codices read: καὶ τὶς ἡ ἁμαρτία οἶκον Ἰούδα; also the descendants of the LXX. as far as we can consult them, defend this reading.<sup>4</sup> But above all it is confirmed both by the Peshitto, and by the Targum, whose free translation (**איפא חטו רבית**) can be based only on **חטאת בית יהודה** (יהודה הלא ירושלם). The last testimony especially seems to be very noteworthy, and when taken in connection with the other considerations, decisive. He who depends upon *authority* for the establishment of the text, has in truth no choice.

But, it is objected, even in this case the *textus receptus* deserves the preference. For: “*probabilis prae ceteris ea est lectio, quae reliquarum ansam dedisse vel etiam earum elementa in se continere videtur.*”<sup>5</sup> Undoubtedly, but also this highest canon of textual criticism must be applied with discrimination. The possibility that **במות** was changed to **חטאת** on account of the parallelism I have already granted. But **במות** can just as easily have arisen from **חטאת**. First, an accident may have taken place; **בית יהודה** may have been changed to “**במת**,”<sup>6</sup> and when this had taken place **חטאת** had to yield. But another supposition is more probable, namely, that a congenial spirit to the Deuteronomist added “*bamôth*” in *margin*e to “the sin of the house of Judah,” and a later copyist inserted this, to him, correct explanation, and then omitted **בית** for the sake of euphony. The one possibility seems to stand opposed to the other; but only as long as it is thought possible, (which we have seen can not be supposed), that Micah wrote **במות יהודה**. He who has been convinced by the foregoing that these words do not furnish a correct sense can not regard them as original, and must acknowledge the true reading to have been: **ומי חטאת בית יהודה הלא ירושלם**

<sup>1</sup> See Kennicott.

<sup>2</sup> According to a marginal note in the *Versio Syr. Hexapantis*; cf. *Origenis Hexapl.*, ed. II., 988. The version of Aquila and of Theodotion have not come down to us, probably because they did not depart from the LXX.

<sup>3</sup> Roorda (p. 12), names him among the witnesses for the reading **חטאת**. Unjustly, as *excelsa* in the reading of all the MSS. of the Vulgate, and is expressly cited by Jerome as the reading of the Hebrew as opposed to that of the LXX. See his *Comment. in Michaeam* (Opp. ed. Vollers. T. VI., 483).

<sup>4</sup> Vetus Lat. (Sabatier. T. II.: 944. *Fragm. Vers. Antehier.* Ed. Ranke, II., p. 16) Arm., Syr., Hexapl., Arab. (cf. Ryssel in Tal. W. V.: 102 seq.).

<sup>5</sup> Tischendorf in *Proll. ad. Ed. N. T. Tam. majorem*, p. xxxiii, coll. xlii, seq.

<sup>6</sup> Just as, on the other hand, Vollers (Tal. W. IV: 3) supposes that **בית** is a mistake for **במות** and that *ἁμαρτία* was subsequently added by the translator, from the preceding. His meritorious work on the *Dodekapropheton der Alexandriner*, would have gained in value, both here and elsewhere, if he had examined the “plus und minus des Alexandriner” and his “Varianten” at the same time, and so had presented them to the reader.